

## PRESS RELEASE

During his June 11-13 visit to Burundi, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Mr. Stephen Ganyard observed the U.S.-funded destruction of hundreds of small arms and light weapons including shoulder-based missiles, rifles and mortars during separate demolitions in Mudugubu and at the National Defense Forces (FDN) Logistics base in Musaga. In his role at the U.S. Department of State, Mr. Ganyard oversees the policies and management of programs concerned with the mitigation and destruction of conventional weapons and man-portable surface-to-air systems (MANPADS). Mr. Ganyard congratulated Burundi for “taking the opportunity to eliminate the small arms and light weapons that threaten the security of its people and their communities.”

In collaboration with UK-based Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and UNDP, several U.S. government-supported projects in Burundi focus on destroying MANPADS and small and light weapons. Hundreds of shoulder-based missiles and almost 2,000 rifles and mortars have been destroyed since August 2007. With U.S. assistance, approximately 100 MANPADS and 6,000 weapons are slated to be destroyed in the coming months. The U.S. government is also funding security improvements to ammunition storage areas in Bujumbura. Mr. Ganyard stated that the U.S. looks forward to continued cooperation with the Burundian government in preventing destructive weapons from reaching groups who menace regional and global security.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Ganyard also visited Gakumbu where the U.S. State Department’s African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) team are training members of Burundi’s FDN for participation in the African Union’s peacekeeping mission to Somalia (AMISOM). The ACOTA team has trained two battalions to support Burundi’s participation in AMISOM and is currently training two additional battalions for deployment in the coming months. Mr. Ganyard particularly praised Burundi and its peacekeepers for its decision to help promote and secure regional stability in Somalia.